



MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE

Executive Branch of Tribal Government

August 12, 2015

St. Paul City Council
15 W Kellogg Blvd #310
St Paul, MN 55102
St. Paul, Minnesota

Dear Council Members:

Last fall, outside TCF Stadium at the University of Minnesota, I witnessed Indian country united in opposition to the name of the Washington D.C. football team. It was a great day and a righteous cause, rooted in defending our identity as Native people. This was an example of Native people coming together to say that we will no longer stand by silently while others use derogatory racial slurs that disparage our identity.

Tonight, the St. Paul City Council will consider a measure to recognize Indigenous Peoples Day in place of Columbus Day. This is no small thing. Like the protest last fall, you are coming together to say that rather than celebrating the person who is a symbol of genocide against Native people, you stand with the Native people of this city, state and Nation who survived the genocide. You are taking a stand for justice, for compassion, and for respect for us, your Anishinaabe and Dakota neighbors and community members.

At the protest last fall, I spoke about internalized oppression, which is what happens when our children begin to believe the stereotypes and myths they hear about themselves. That is the danger of normalizing a racial slur used by the Washington football team. In passing this resolution, the City of St. Paul is not just doing something symbolic. You are standing with your Native neighbors and community members, helping us in the fight against internalized oppression. In saying "no more" celebrating Columbus, you are telling every Native child in this city that they are loved, that they are wanted, that they are valued and that they are beautiful. This is no small thing.

The day that the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe became a business partner in downtown St. Paul was a very proud day for the Band. Ever since we purchased the Crowne Plaza and the Doubletree, we have felt extraordinarily welcomed by the City of St. Paul. Tonight, however, we feel even more pride in having partnered with the people of St. Paul. In passing this resolution, you are replacing a day that symbolizes colonization with a day that celebrates our history and culture as well as our future. You are paving the way for other cities across the Nation.

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URBAN OFFICE

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On behalf of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, "Miigwech" (thank you) to Mayor Coleman, the City Council, and all the people of St. Paul. This is a wonderful day for this great city. The Band is humbled and honored to be your friend and your partner!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melanie Benjamin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melanie Benjamin
Chief Executive